

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 330

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT: SP
SUBJECT: SUAREZ-OPPOSITION DISCUSSIONS

1. SUMMARY. ANTON CANELLAS, LEADER OF UNION DEMOCRATICA DE CATALUNYA AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATIVE ON "GROUP OF NINE" OPPOSITION NEGOTIATING TEAM, DESCRIBED JANUARY 11 OPPOSITION DISCUSSIONS WITH SUAREZ AS HIGHLY ENCOURAGING. CANELLAS PARTICIPATED IN MEETING TOGETHER WITH FELIP GONZALEZ (PSOE), JOAQUIN SANTRUSTEGUI (ALIANZA LIBERAL) AND JULIO JAUREGUI (PNV) WHO HAD BEEN DESIGNATED BY FULL GROUP TO CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT. TWO TOPICS WERE CONSIDERED, AMNESTY FOR POLITICAL PRISONER AND THE LEGAL STATUS OF POLITICAL PARTIES. CANELLAS EXPECTS PROGRESS ON BOTH QUESTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING CONVERSATION ON JANUARY 12 IN HIS BARCELONA PARTY HEADQUARTERS, ANTON CANELLAS, LEADER OF UNION DEMOCRATICA DE CATALUNYA AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATIVE ON "GROUP OF NINE" OPPOSITION NEGOTIATING TEAM DESCRIBED TO DCM AND CONGEN BARCELONE PREVIOUS DAY'S MEETING WITH SUAREZ. FOLLOWING WERE MAJOR POINTS MENTIONED BY CANELLAS:

3. GROUP OF NINE HAD SOME DIFFICULTY IN WORKING OUT NEGOTIATING PROCEDURES AFTER SUAREZ TOLD GROUP SPOKESMEN TIerno
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GALVAN AND JORDI PUJOL THAT HE WOULD NOT MEET WITH ANY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. PCE REPRESENTATIVE SANTIAGO CARRILLO HAD SUGGESTED THAT TWO ORIGINAL EMISSARIES TIerno AND PUJOL CONTINUE TO CONDUCT THE NEGOTIATIONS. THIS HOWEVER WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO EITHER CANELLAS OR PSOE REPRESENTATIVE FELIPE GONZALES. (POSE SOURCE CONFIRMS THIS.) THEY IN TURN SUGGESTED CARRILLO SIMPLY DROP OUT AND THAT THE NEGOTIA-

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WITH SUAREZ BE CONDUCTED BY THE REMAINING EIGHT MEMBERS. THE COMPROMISE FINALLY ADOPTED--THAT THE DISCUSSIONS BE CONDUCTED BY SUB-GROUPS OF FOUR--WOULD CONTINUE TO BE ACCEPTABLE CANELLAS SAID ONLY IF HE AND GONZALEZ WERE MEMBERS OF FUTURE SUG-GROUPS. CANELLAS STATED THAT HE HAD BEEN CONCERNED OVER THE ATTITUDE OF THE PSOE IN THE SENSE THAT HE THOUGHT IT WAS COOPERATING TOO CLOSELY WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND TENDING TOWARD INTRANSIGENCE. ON HIS RECENT CONTACTS WITH FELIPE GONZALEZ IN THE GROUP OF NINE HOWEVER, HE WAS INCOURAGED TO FIND PSOE POSITIONS MORE MODERATE AND REASONABLE ALTHOUGH HE STILL HAD SOME DOUBTS. ACCORDING TO CANELLAS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (AND HE THOUGHT THE PSOE ALSO) WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THIS SPRING REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME OF THE PRESENT POLEMIC OVER LEGILZATIONS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

4. IN THE JANUARY 11 DISCUSSION WITH SUAREZ TWO POTICS HAD BEEN CONSIDERED--ANMESTY FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS AND THE STATUS OF POLITICAL PARTIES. THE PRESIDENT AND THE FOUR MEMBERS OF THE SUB-GROUP HAD AGREED ON THE DESIRABILITY OF ATTEMPTING TO ELIMINATE THE AMNESTY QUESTION AS A MAJOR ISSUE PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS. CANELLAS NOTED THAT THE ORIOLE KIDNAPPING HAD MADE IT MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH THE MATTER BUT HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT PROGRESS WOULD BE MADE. HE SAID SUAREZ HAD INDICATED THAT IT PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO ISSUE A NEW GENERAL AMNESTY LAW BUT THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THOSE INVOLVED IN ASSASSINATIONS PRISONERS COULD BE RELEASED

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BY THE COURTS. THE ELIMINATION OF THE PUBLIC ORDER TRIBUNALS AND THE NEW LIMITATIONS ON MILITARY JURISDICTION WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE COURTS TO ACT. CANLLAS EXPECTED SOME 25 OR 30 PRISONERS TO BE RELEASED IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE--BEFORE THE END OF THE MONTH.

5. ON THE LEGALIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES, CANELLAS SIAD THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING A SYSTEM UNDER WHICH PARTIES WOULD SIMPLY REGISTER ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE WITHOUT ANY FORMAL ACT OF APPROVAL BY THE GOVERNMENT. A NEW LAW WOULD NOT BE REQUIRED. IF SUCH A PROCEDURE WERE ESTABLISHED HIS OWN PARTY, UDC, WOULD REGISTER IMMEDIATELY AND HE THOUGHT THE PSOE WOULD ALSO. THE PCE COULD ALSO REGISTER UNDER

THIS SYSTEM IF IT SO DESIRED. ALTHOUGH PROVISIONS OF THE PENAL CODE MIGHT THEN APPLY TO THE PCE IT WOULD BE UP TO THE COURTS TO DECIDE THE QUESTIONS AND IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WOULD NOT FEEL OBLIGED TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

6. CANELLAS SAID HE HAD BEEN MUCH IMPRESSED BY SUAREZ' EVIDENT DESIRE THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSIONS TO REACH ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE OPPOSITION THAT WOULD AVOID RADICAL CONFRONTATIONS DURING THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS. MEETINGS WERE TO BE SCHEDULED IN THE FUTURE ON THE ELECTROAL LAW AND ON SPANISH INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, THE LATER PRESUMABLY WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF ELIMINATING SUCH QUESTIONS AS NATO AND EEC MEMBERSHIP AS MAJOR ISSUES DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. CANELLAS SAID SUAREZ ALSO HAD MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF JOINT MEETINGS WITH OTHER "FORCES" SUCH AS ALIANZA POPULAR AND PARTIDO POPULAR.

7 TURNING BRIEFLY TO UDC VIEWS ON THE ELECTORAL LAW CANELLAS SAID HE INTENDED TO PRESS FOR A MINIMUM OF ONE

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REPRESENTATIVE PER PROVINCE. HE ASSUMED THAT ALIANZA POPULAR WOULD ASK FOR FOUR, THE GOVERNMENT FOR THREE AND THAT A REASONABLE COMPROMISE MIGHT BE TWO. ON THE QUESTION OF THE MINIMUM PERCENTAGE VOTE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN PARTY REPRESENTATION IN THE PARLIAMENT, THE UDE OPENING POSITION WAS THAT THE PERCENTAGE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED ON THE BASIS OF INDIVIDUAL PROVINCES. IN ELECTING SENATORS, UDC WANTED A RUNOFF IF THERE WERE NO MAJORITY WINNERS IN THE FIRST VOTE. IN SUCH A RUNOFF, UDC WOULD BE WILLING TO ACT WITH OTHER NON-COMMUNIST PARTIES INCLUDING THE PSOE.

8. CANELLAS IS A SOFT-SPOKEN LOW-KEY BUT EFFECTIVE OPERATOR WHO HAS DEMONSTRATED FIRMNESS IN HIS CONVICTIONS AND WHEN NECESSARY BULL-DOG TENACITY IN POLITICAL MANEUVERING AND NEGOTIATIONS. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN CANDID AND COOPERATIVE IN HIS DICUSSIONS WITH US.

9. THIS MESSAGD PREPARED BY ANCONGEN BARCELONA.STABLER

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